

## Animal ID Comments

There is a tremendous amount of debate about private vs. public or governmental databases. I for one do not believe that a private database is anymore secure than a governmental database. Can any company or entity guarantee without a doubt that they will not be bought out by a larger corporation. The majority of agriculture suppliers are now large conglomerates. A large percentage of these corporations are foreign owned. What guarantee do producers have that these private entities will not go bankrupt and then who owns the animal ID database? A governmental database needs to be protected from FOIA through legislation, however it is for sure that it will not be sold to some foreign country or tied up in bankruptcy court.

In my region of the country there is a diverse livestock industry involving numerous species. The majority of the private plans that I have read about only deal with a specific type of animal or even breed. Who is going to make sure all of these systems are compatible and readily available in the event of a disease outbreak. Also, in the southeast there are numerous small and limited resource producers. The average cattle herd in our state is approximately 24 cows and many species have much smaller herd sizes. These producers do not have the ability to spread out the cost of a private system over large numbers. Who is going to regulate the system to prevent the elimination of small producers?

The necessity of a National system of identification is apparent for trade purposes, public safety, bioterrorism control and consumer confidence. The basic part of the system needs to be controlled as a governmental database. This includes the premises ID numbers, the animal ID numbers and tracking information. The private contribution to the national system needs to be for those producers that want to use the system to add value to their livestock. These producers can then choose whether to shoulder the extra costs and determine from their markets whether a system would profit them. This type of private system would keep costs in line through competition between tag companies.

It is my understanding that USDA already has a national computer system that has the capability to handle this program. We should use a system that has already been paid for with tax dollars. Why not use an agency such as FSA that already has a presence in most counties across the country for the basic governmental part of the program?

Submitted by Mike Mayfield of Mayfield Angus Farm ( 83 head registered Angus herd)  
Secretary – Treasurer Giles County Cattleman's Association  
Member Giles County Beef Marketing Alliance